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# Economic and Social Council

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**Commission for Social Development**
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Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all**

## Statement submitted by the Elizabeth Seton Federation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 2006.

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**Statement**

1. In consideration of the theme: Full Employment and Decent Work for All, during the forty-fifth session of the Commission on Social Development, NGOs endorsing this statement offer the following for consideration:

2. Presently many states are in transition from a war situation after having signed peace accords following wars or conflicts. The conditions of their citizens require astute, multi-faceted planning and cooperation at all levels of society to achieve "Full Employment and Decent Work for All."

3. In Latin America and Africa there are states in which entire generations never learned to live productively in a peaceful environment:

- Families forced to migrate or live in refugee camps.
- Children obligated to serve as soldiers.

4. The war contributed to establishing cultures of violence, hatred, fear and hopelessness. Crime is part of life, especially for young people who were born during the war. They never knew conditions of dignity, respect, or consideration of human rights.

5. To bring "Full Employment and Decent Work for All," we should review experiences and formulate strategies and action plans to implement goal #25 of the World Summit for Social Development, the Copenhagen Declaration.

> We the heads of state and Government are committed to political, economic, ethical and spiritual vision for social development based on human dignity, human rights equality, respect, peace, democracy, mutual responsibility and cooperation, full respect for various religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds of people. Accordingly, we will give the highest priority in national, regional, and international policies and actions, based on full participation by all.[1]

6. Former Secretary General Kofi Annan summed up the present inertia of states and governments on many issues and situations:

> We all know what the problems are, and we all know what we have promised to achieve. What we need now is not more declarations or promises but—action, action to fulfill the promises already made.[2]

7. At this moment there is need for strategies and action plans to "promote social programs, justice and the betterment of the human condition with full participation by all."[3] It is urgent to restore peace in countries that have known war and violence. The international community must be actively involved in restoring a culture of forgiveness and reconciliation that includes the possibility of "Full Employment and Decent Work for All."

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1 World Summit for social Development, Copenhagen Declaration—Part B #25

2 Annan, Kofi, 60th Anniversary of UN General Assembly Ministerial Meeting 9/2005

3 Ibid, Annan

8. Nearly 1 billion people belong to groups subject to exclusion. This is both shameful and intolerable. All people want the right to speak, choose and act on their own behalf. The lesson is clear, succeeding is not simply a question of legislative and policy changes. Constitutions and legislation that provide protections and guarantees for minorities, indigenous groups and other groups are a critical foundation for broader freedoms.[4]

9. Participation welcomes and respects people; it builds capacity and affords education and training to allow development of a peaceful economic system. Several countries have worked to establish forgiveness, healing of the memories and reconciliation; few, however, have established practical programs to promote and train the unemployed and unskilled to prepare for productive work.

10. South Africa is an example of good practice in this area: During the Presidency of Nelson Mandela, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission allowed South Africans to come to terms with the trauma of Apartheid and to move toward becoming a productive society and country. After the Truth and Reconciliation Commission ended its work in 1997 and published its report in 2003, there were still many who had not been able to tell their story. This was made possible through the establishment of The Institute for Healing of Memories in Cape Town, South Africa. Father Michael Lapsley, who had lost both hands and one eye from a letter bomb in 1990, established the Institute to give persons and groups the opportunity to have their experiences told and acknowledged; to this date, the Institute for Healing of Memories has offered workshops to individuals and groups throughout South Africa, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, USA, Britain, Australia and Ireland.[5]

11. Recent news articles highlighting forgiveness and reconciliation have come from Rwanda where in some coffee producing regions to get the beans grown, harvested and processed both killer and victims from the genocide are striking an uneasy peace born of economic co-dependence. "They need each other to make that container of coffee" says Timothy Schilling, a coffee consultant referring to steel shipping containers that are packed with beans and shipped overseas.[6] Jeanette, a Tutsi woman who lost husband, parents and children in the genocide, hired several Hutus to assist her with her coffee farm.

12. In Uganda the terrorists are welcomed back. Some 400 former rebels gathered beneath a "blessing tree" for a ritual that welcomed them back to their community. The ex-rebels stepped on an egg symbolizing breaking open a new life and restoring their innocence. There is even talk in Uganda of reconciling with Kony, the LRA chief who ordered some 200,000 civilian deaths.[7]

13. Similar stories of reconciliation have come from Burundi and Liberia. Truth and Reconciliation Commissions have functioned in Peru, Morocco and Sierra Leone to mention just a few. According to Pierre Hazan, United States Institute of Peace, despite limitations the IER (Instance Equite et Reconciliation), provides a road map to further democratization and

4 Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World, UNDP, 2004.

5 Lapsley Michael, Institute for Healing of Memories, Origins of Workshop Methodology, www.healingofmemories.co.za

6 McLaughlin, Abraham, *Africa After War: Why Jeannette Employs her Family's killer*, The Christian Science Monitor 10/24/06.

7 McLaughlin, Abraham, Africa After War: Paths to Forgiveness Paths to Forgiveness-Ugandans Welcome Terrorists Back, The Christian Science Monitor 10/23/06.

provides a positive model for social and political reforms in the rest of the Arab world and encourages local and international players to support such reforms.

14. Yet, these countries all have to find creative and new ways of helping its citizens' transition from war to peace by a thorough program of employment training and creation. A recent model of employment and development comes from The Table Mountain National Park project in Cape Town, South Africa. The project, an expansion of a public works program, employs some 420 long term-unemployed persons in developing new hiking trails, protecting the bio-diversity and boosting the economy by inviting regional tourism. This program provides ongoing education and development. Participants receive diplomas that are recognized throughout the country. Mathe was unemployed for a long time…her training and experience have provided her with extensive knowledge of safety, first aid, navigation, geology and history. The experience has made her an assertive person who is determined to explore the opportunities offered in South Africa's booming tourist industry.[8]

15. **We believe that:**

- **Countries moving from war and conflict to a culture of peace will benefit from transitional justice processes incorporating forgiveness, healing and reconciliation both public and private. A moral and historical framework must underpin these processes so that all peoples in the country may be touched in a manner with which they are able to identify.**
- **These processes must be incorporated at every level of government but the main burden falls within the national level. Governments must recognize and honestly acknowledge their part in the war and conflict.**
- **There are many models of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions.**
- **Peace Institutes and Universities, forgiveness, healing and reconciliation programs provide necessary mechanisms for people who have been enemies to work through anger, fear and bitterness. People need to be able to just get along.**
- **Full employment, education and work skills are necessary and should run parallel with forgiveness and healing processes.**

*Note*:

Statement endorsed and supported by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: Brothers of Charity, Congregations of St. Joseph, Dominican Leadership Conference, International Association of Charities, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation, International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Soroptimist International and UNANIMA International

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8 Bos, Thessa, "*Mountain Trails Open Paths for Unemployment,*" Inter Press Service News Agency, October 16, 2006, www.ipsnews.net.